

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HARVARD COLLEGE BLACK MEN'S FORUM

Preamble and Pledge

As a member of the Black Men's Forum, it is my duty to uphold the standards of this organization; brotherhood, manhood and fidelity. I will prove myself a good brother by making a conscious effort to know my fellow brethren on a personal level and by providing a means for advice to those who are in need. I will prove myself a man by helping to make those who are weak as strong as I through serving my community to the best of my ability. I will prove myself faithful by attending meetings regularly, and supporting the events and programs sponsored by the Black Men's Forum. In accomplishing these duties I will best represent myself, the Black men on this campus and those throughout the world.

Article I. Name

The name of the organization shall be The Harvard College Black Men's Forum (BMF).

Article II. Purpose

The Harvard Black Men's Forum is concerned with political, social, and cultural issues regarding black men on Harvard University's campus and beyond. The group will foster a supportive atmosphere of brotherhood among the black male community on campus. The group will also promote greater awareness and understanding of these issues both at Harvard and beyond, through all appropriate means, including publications, meetings, seminars, and active engagement with the community.

Article III. Membership

1. Membership in this Forum shall be open to all students in good standing currently enrolled in Harvard College, regardless of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, or physical disability.
2. Affiliated, non-voting membership shall also be allowed to include those students of graduate and professional schools of the University.
3. Full membership shall be retained until the student severs relations with the Forum, either through graduation, noncompliance with the standards of the Forum, or an absence from the College of more than one academic year (two consecutive full academic terms). Membership will be retained during the vacations and recesses of the University.
 - a. Exceptions to this policy shall be made at the discretion of the Board.
4. All members, upon entering the Forum, will give a single dues payment, designated by the board that will represent a "life time" membership in the organization.
5. All members shall be required to perform three and one half (3.5) hours of community service per semester, in order to remain in good standing in the organization. This service shall be performed beyond the Harvard community and shall be documented and recorded by an officer of the Forum.
6. All members shall be required to sign a membership pledge, which will bind them to uphold the standards of this organization.
7. Any member may resign at any time by filing a written resignation with the Secretary.

Article IV. Officers

1. The Board of the Forum shall consist of the officers of the group. These officers shall include a President, Vice-President, Brotherhood Chair, Treasurer, Communications Chair, Social Chair, Development Chair, Public Service Chair, and Freshman Representative. These positions shall constitute the Executive Board of the Forum. They shall be charged with the day-to-day operation of the Forum, and may meet in executive session as necessary in order to fulfill these responsibilities.
2. All officers of the Forum shall be registered undergraduates in good standing with Harvard College, and members of the Forum in good standing.
3. The full Board shall meet on at least a monthly basis, at a time and place of their determination, in order to provide oversight and coordination of the activities of the Forum. The Board shall have the authority to create committees as necessary to carry out specific objectives of the Forum. The determination of the size, constitution, and duties of such ad hoc committees shall be determined by the Board, and the Board shall retain ultimate control over the actions of such committees.
4. Executive Board Positions
 - a. The President shall be the chief officer of the Forum and shall exercise supervision and control of its activities and programs. The President shall be the official spokesperson of the Forum.
 - b. The Vice President shall assist the President and assume his or her duties when the President is unable to serve. The Vice President shall also serve as the official BMF representative on the Celebration of Black Women Committee.
 - c. The Brotherhood Chair shall be responsible for generating stimulating and lively topics for the membership to consider in its general meetings, as well as for organizing events for the membership to attend. The Brotherhood Chair shall also chair and facilitate all meetings of the membership.
 - d. The Treasurer shall have general charge of the financial affairs of the Forum, and shall keep accurate records of these affairs. The Treasurer shall also be responsible for maintaining the official list of the members of the Forum for purposes of determining eligibility to vote.
 - e. The Communications Chair shall handle all formal correspondence between members, officers, and alumni of the Forum, as well as managing any official statements or communications on behalf of the Forum. The Communications Chair will also keep a record of all meeting of the Forum and of all activities and programs. It will be the duty of the Communications Chair to ensure that the history of the Forum remains preserved and available to the members and alumni.
 - f. The Social Chair shall conceive of and organize social events that may be used by the Forum to raise funds for its projects and further the aims of the Forum.
 - g. The Development Chair shall be responsible for ensuring that adequate revenue is brought into the Forum to fund all annual programming and to provide for long-term financial stability. The Development Chair shall oversee all efforts to raise funds either through corporate sponsorship or individual donation. The Development Chair will work with the President to ensure that the Forum remains financially sustainable.
 - h. The Public Service Chair shall be responsible for motivating the membership to engage in public service and volunteer projects in the long-term and short-term. The Public Service Chair shall also be responsible for keeping the Board and membership informed of political issues and issues of social justice, both on and off campus. The Public Service Chair will strive to provide the membership with opportunities for training and direct involvement so as to ensure a lifetime dedication to community uplift. The Public Service Chair will also serve as the official BMF liaison to the David Walker Scholars Program.
 - i. The Freshmen Representative shall serve as a liaison between the freshmen class and the administration of the Forum. The Freshman Representative shall also serve as the official representative of the Forum to the Harvard Foundation.
5. The President and Executive Board shall have the prerogative to appoint BMF members to oversee board projects from time to time as necessary. These positions shall not have a board vote and will cease to exist after the completion of their project.
6. All decisions of the Board, in either executive or general session, are reviewable by the full membership.
 - a. Any three members of the organization may challenge a decision of the Board, by submitting a challenge, with reason(s) stated, to the Secretary, and by announcing their challenge at any general or special meeting of the Forum.

- b. Any decision of the Board shall be considered void if overturned by a two-thirds majority vote of the membership.

Article V. Elections

1. Officers serving in Executive Board positions shall be elected annually by members of the group. Elections shall be held during the month of April for all positions except that of the Freshmen Representative. Elections for freshmen representative shall take place during the month of October.
2. General Election Conduct
 - a. At least one month prior to the set date for elections, the Board shall designate a member of the organization who is not standing for election to any position as the Election Chair.
 - b. The Election Chair shall be responsible for all matters pertaining to the conduct of elections, and shall be the final authority in all matters concerning the electoral process.
 - i. The Election Chair may, at his discretion, designate two addition members of the organization to serve as an Election Commission, for the purposes of counting ballots and ensuring fairness in the electoral process. These appointments must be approved by the Board prior to the due date for nominations. No candidate for any office on the Board may serve on the Election Commission.
 - c. Any undergraduate member of the group may be nominated for election. Nominations shall be filed with the Election Chair at least two weeks before the date appointed for elections.
 - i. All candidates for office shall be required to submit position papers to the Chair, to be released to the membership, stating his intent to run and how he intend to fulfill the duties of his office and further the goals and principles of the Forum.
 - ii. Candidates may choose to have their name placed in consideration for multiple positions by notifying the Election Chair of their intent prior to the close of the nomination period. The candidate must submit a ranking the positions in order of his preference, which the Election Chair shall keep private. The candidate shall also submit a position paper for his first-choice position, which shall be released to the membership of the Forum.
 - d. The Election Chair shall be responsible for verifying the eligibility of all candidates, of informing the membership of all candidates, and distributing the position papers of all candidates, at least one week prior to the date of elections, and of preparing ballots by the day of the election.
 - e. All members in good standing shall have one vote by secret ballot. The winner shall be the candidate who secures the most votes of all cast.
 - i. Members may vote by written proxy if necessary. Notification of intent to vote in this matter must be filed with the Election Chair, and the ballot must be submitted prior to the designated election time. The Election Chair shall be responsible for the verification of the legitimacy of any vote submitted in this manner.
 - f. The Election Chair shall announce the results of the election to the membership within twenty-four hours of the election meeting. Vote counts shall remain private.
 - i. Challenges to the election process or results must be submitted to the Election Chair within three days of the announcement of results. The Election Chair shall rule on all challenges in a timely fashion. Decisions of the Election Chair are final.
 - g. The term of office for all officers, elected and appointed, except that of the freshmen representative shall start on the first day of summer recess and shall be terminated on the last day of the following academic year.
3. Freshman Representative Election Conduct
 - a. Elections for the freshman representative shall be administered by the Board of the Forum, in accordance with the principles and procedures outlined above. All nominations and challenges shall be submitted to the Brotherhood Chair, who will serve as the Election Chair.
 - b. The term of office for the freshmen representative shall begin upon the ratification of the results of the election, and shall continue until the first meeting of October the following year.

Article VI. Removal of Officers

1. The membership may call with cause for the removal of any officer of the Forum, elected or appointed, by presenting a petition to the Board, which clearly states the reason(s) for seeking removal of the officer, and with the signatures of one-third of the membership.
2. After receipt of such a petition, the Board will give notice to the membership at least two (2) days prior to the next general or special meeting, at which time the petition must be entertained, and the officer in question given opportunity to answer the charges.
3. Officers of the Forum may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the membership.

Article VII. Vacancies

1. A Board position shall be considered vacant if the position is not contested in the general election of officers in the spring, if the officer in the position has been removed, or if the officer files a statement with the Board stating his inability to serve.
2. Officers of the Forum who are on leave from the College for a period longer than one-half of a full academic term, for disciplinary or academic reasons shall be required to withdraw from the Board.
 - a. This clause shall also apply to officers of the organization who study abroad, although exceptions may be granted at the discretion of the Board, and with the approval of a simple majority of the membership.
3. Any Board vacancy shall be filled by the full Board within two weeks of the vacancy of the position. Anyone who fills a vacancy on the Board of the Forum must submit a position paper to the membership delineating his commitment to the principles of the Forum, as well as his qualifications for the position.

Article VIII. Meetings

1. Meetings of the group shall be held on a regular basis for the purpose of determining policy, activities, programs, and other business as brought up by the membership. Special meetings of the group may be called by the President, the Vice-President, or any seven members of the group.
2. A simple majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum for purposes of conducting official business. For meetings during which no official business will be conducted, twenty percent (20%) of the membership shall constitute a quorum.
3. The Brotherhood Chair shall chair and facilitate all meetings. In the absence of the Brotherhood Chair, the President or his designee shall chair the meeting.
4. Notice of regular and special meetings shall be communicated to all members of the group by the Secretary.
5. All members in good standing shall have one vote with respect to any matters of official business or of resolutions put forward during a meeting.
 - a. Members may vote on these matters by written proxy if necessary. Notification of intent to vote in this matter must be filed with the Vice-President prior to the designated meeting time. The Executive Board shall be responsible for verification of the legitimacy of any vote submitted in this manner.
6. Any seven members of the Forum may propose an amendment. Proposals shall be filed in writing with the Secretary one week prior to a general or special meeting, so that the group may debate the proposal at the earliest possible convenience.
7. This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the Forum. Amendments may be voted on at regular or special meetings.

Article X. Alumni Board

1. A board of 7 alumni shall exist to support the efforts of the Executive Board and to engage with all alumni of the Forum to keep them connected with the current efforts of the organization.
2. The exact nature of the board's duties and structure shall be determined by the Alumni Board "By-Laws" which shall be ratified by at least a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board. All subsequent amendments to the By-Laws must also receive a two-thirds vote of the Executive Board in order to be enacted.
3. All members of the Alumni Board shall serve a two-year term with no term limits imposed. These terms shall be staggered so that it will never be the case that all board positions will be vacant in the same year.

4. Positions on the Alumni Board will be filled by a majority vote of all current undergraduate Executive Board members for the candidate in question. No Alumni Board position may be filled unless that candidate also receives a unanimous vote of support from the other current members of the Alumni Board.
5. All decisions of the Alumni Board are to be taken as strong suggestions by the undergraduate Executive Board.

Article XI. Ratification

This constitution shall be ratified by a two-thirds majority vote of the membership.

Article XII. Enabling Clauses

1. All questions of constitutional interpretation and interpretation of bylaws shall be adjudicated by the full Board, with a three-fourths (75%) majority vote of the Board necessary to adopt any position. Decisions on matters of constitutional interpretation are appealable to the full membership under Article IV, Section 7.
2. The membership of the Forum shall have all the powers necessary and proper for executing the purposes, as well as ensuring the efficient and effective realization of the articulated goals and stated principles of the Forum.

Submitted by Colleston A. Morgan, Jr. '07
Political Action Chair '03-'05, Vice-President '06

Amended by Cedrick Yancey '12
Alumni Relations Chair '09-'10, Vice President '10

BMF Mission Statement

As Black men in this country, we are constantly faced with the reality of our situation as a people. The issues of fratricide, affirmative action and drug abuse among many others serve to torment our days and haunt our nights. An escape from this reality would be a welcome gift for us all. Although an oasis in the midst of this social and economic desert in which we live is unlikely to appear any time soon, we hold within us the ability to provide a means of temporary relief for ourselves and our comrades, while simultaneously leading our people ever closer to the promised land. This innate ability is no supernatural power given to us by a god, no secret metaphysical strength of mind or body bestowed on those with darker skin. It is instead a power which we observe everyday and is within us all: love.

It is the mission of the Harvard Black Men's Forum to uncover and refine this love in the black men on this campus and channel it to others of our community at large. To this end we will strive to be always willing to lend not just a hand, but our complete bodies and souls to a brother in need. This giving of oneself to a comrade can take many forms; spending a few days out of the week with children you have never met, comforting a brother who has lost a loved one, offering advice to one of our own in the midst of trying times.

In short, our aim is to uphold the three principles which are the basis of this organization; brotherhood, manhood and fidelity. Maintaining our allegiance to this mission will no doubt prove to be difficult at times. It will very likely place great strains on the members of this organization in the way that any good moral and spiritual battle does. We do not shrink from this challenge. Instead, we face it with the full knowledge and confidence that we will emerge as victors in the battle for our manhood.

The Honorable Keith Bernard '99

Vice President '97-'98

President '98-'99